leased lands occupied by them for operating petrol pumps upon their closure; and

(b) the grounds and the circumstances under which Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. closed down the petrol pump in front of Anna Arivalayam (Headquarters of DMK party) Anna Salai, Chennai, vacated and handed over the site and the terms and conditions stipulated for such closure/vacation respectively and whether the same have been complied with?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA): (a) The grounds on which the oil companies vacate the retail outlet leased site are generally as follows:—

(i) Based on Court orders.

(ii) On expiry of lease of land and legal opinion that no legal recourse is available for holding on to the site.

(iii) As per the guidelines, surrender of land to the landlord may be considered if an alternate site is offered by the landlord, and the original land has to be vacated on expiry of lease.

(iv) if the retail outlet operation becomes unviable at the site due to:

(a) Closure of roads/particular traffic.

(b) Shifting of octroi post/revision in octroi rates.

(c) Realignment of the existing road by a new one.

(d) Reasons beyond the control of the oil companies/dealer which may affect the viability of the retail outlet due to exhorbitant increase in rentals etc.

(e) It the Retail Outlet is declared as objectionable at the site by a competent authority like Collector/Dist. Magistrate/Chief Controller of Explosives etc.

(b) The HPCL Retail Outlet, M/s Balaji Agencies was operative at site opposite Anna Arivalayam at Anna Salai, Chennai. The site was taken on lease by erstwhile CALTEX for period of 10 years w.e.f. 22-10-62. During the currency of the lease the site was purchased by the DMK Charitable Trust. On refusal of Trust to register the deed for option period of 22.10.72 to 21.10.82, CALTEX filed a specific performance suit against the Trust. After nationalisation of the Caltex, statutory option under Caltex Take Over Act was exercised for a period of 10 years upto 21.10.92. Thereafter, on expiry of lease, the HPCL vacated the site and resited it to Anna Nagar, Chennai. The Retail Outlet was commissioned in April, 1992.

Appointment of a Judicial Commission on Safety

*59. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to appoint a Judicial Commission to go into all aspects of safety and make suitable recommendations; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Concession for North-East

*60. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Minister of Railways have announced more concessions for North-east;

(b) if so, the details of concessions; and

(c) what are the steps being taken to provide railway lines to link all the North-east State Capitals?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) A policy decision has been taken to link the Capitals of North Eastern States by rail. According construction of new lines from Kumarghat to Agartala and from Harmuti nagar have been sanctioned. Construction of a new line from Diphu to Karong as the first phase of the rail link to Imphal has been included in the Budget and would be taken up after obtaining the requisite clearances. Gauge conversion of line from Bairabi to Katakhal as the first phase of line to Sairang/ Aizwal has also been included in the budget and would be taken up after reuisite clearances. A survey for construction of a rail line to Gangtok has also been sanctioned.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Losses due to rain and floods in Orissa

311. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated damage caused to Orissa by heavy rain and flood during the last monsoon season;

(b) the amount of fund needed to bear loss suffered by farmers and for the reconstruction of roads, ponds, canals and bridges in that State;

(c) the fund sanctioned by the Central Government for these purposes; and

(d) the details of the steps taken in the that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) According to reports received from the Government of Orissa, heavy rains and floods during the South-West monsoon, 1997, affected a population of 3.93 lakh in 19 districts claimed 29 human lives and damaged 87678 houses and public propoerty worth Rs. 125.83 crore.

(b) Government of Orissa have assessed the requirements of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in various sectors at Rs. 125.84 crore.

(c) and (d) Under the existing scheme, the State Government undertake relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities utilising the allocations of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). During 1997-98, the CRF allocation for Orissa is Rs. 51.72 crore consisting of a Central share of Rs. 38.79 crore and State share of Rs. 12.93 crore. Government of India have already released three instalments of Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 29.09 crore to Government of Orissa during the current year.

Damage to cotton crop in Punjab

312. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 80% of the cotton crop in Abohar Fazilka of Ferozepur district and Muktsar Malout of Muktsar district in Punjab has been damaged due to American Ball Worm inspite of many sprays of pesticides on the crop;

(b) what steps have been taken to stop such colossal loss to farmers; and

(c) whether there is a proposal to give them compensation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) Information obtained from Govt. of Punjab reveals that cotton crop in parts of Abohar Fazilka areas of Ferozpur district and most of the area of Muktsar and Malout of Muktsar has been damaged due to heavy and prolonged rains resulting in water logging in these areas. As per the information very little incidence of American Ballworm has been observed.

(b) and (c) The farmers were advised to spray the cotton crop as per recommendation of the State Department of Agriculture. Registration Committee has already approved a number of pesticides,